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PERSONAL LETTERS OF  
REGINALD NÖEL SULLIVAN, S. S. U. 65  
OF THE  
AMERICAN AMBULANCE  
FIELD SERVICE











REGINALD NOEL SULLIVAN, S. S. U. 65, AMERICAN FIELD SERVICE

"SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE"

PERSONAL LETTERS OF  
REGINALD NÖEL SULLIVAN, S. S. U. 65  
OF THE  
AMERICAN AMBULANCE  
FIELD SERVICE



PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

1917

## F O R E W O R D

**M**R. REGINALD NÖEL SULLIVAN, of the American Ambulance Field Service, has written entertainingly from France. His letters were addressed to his aunt, Miss Mary Louise Phelan, with the request that they be passed around among a circle of five or six relatives and friends, who were deeply interested not only in his career as a member of the Field Service, but in his daily doings and his reflections upon current events. As there has been a request from many sources to read these letters I have seen fit to have them printed for private circulation, without the knowledge of the writer and with the intention of sending copies to his personal friends as a Christmas souvenir. They may also have some value as a picture of a peace-loving young American interested more in saving than in taking life—yet impelled by a high sense of duty to enlist.

J. D. P.

San Francisco, December 5, 1917.

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*Hon. J. D. P.*

FEB 26 1918



PERSONAL LETTERS OF  
REGINALD NÖEL SULLIVAN, S. S. U. 65  
OF THE  
AMERICAN AMBULANCE  
FIELD SERVICE

AMERICAN FIELD SERVICE IN FRANCE  
21 Rue Raynouard, PARIS

*Training Camp for Ambulance Men.  
August 27, 1917.*

*Dearest Everyone:—*

This will have to be a joint letter to you all \* \* \*

THE VOYAGE

Of course there is so much to tell that I really don't know where to begin, but as I wrote all of you news up to date from the steamer and sent cables to most of you on my arrival, I will begin with news of a week ago Sunday night. It was then we had the concert on board at which twelve hundred dollars was collected for the French wounded. I was responsible for fifty dollars of it in an unusual way. As I wrote you I was expected to sing, which I did (the Magic Flute Aria and "I Love You Truly," by request) and also played various accompaniments in my fashion! At about the end of the program, one of the men who had promised to play declined to do so, but offered fifty dollars to the cause if I would sing a verse of "All Through the Night!" You may imagine how delighted I was to do it and how I regretted, at least for the sake of the wounded, who were to profit, that someone else didn't offer another amount for the second verse! The boat was depressingly dark those last nights! From the start we had been used to having no light on deck, but when the same thing was tried indoors, it seemed as if we had all lost our sight. All day Monday everyone spent their time looking for submarines and many were really disappointed that none materialized. As a matter of fact our rear gun fired on what it thought was an U-boat once, but what really

was a barrel. I spent all day Monday and most of Tuesday writing. Ships were being sighted right along and the excitement was intense. About two o'clock in the afternoon the long expected convoy came along. It was composed of a dirigible and a torpedo destroyer, and with this escort we sighted land and entered the river, an eighty-mile sail along which carried us into the Bordeaux harbor.

#### BORDEAUX

It was around eight-thirty when we docked there. The usual confusion regarding baggage took place on board, and I must say I was sorry to speak French on that occasion. Interpreting was probably a useful, but not a very agreeable task. An especially chartered street car brought us from the boat to the train and all the way we sang, principally the Marseillaise and the Star Spangled Banner. It was indescribably wonderful to be in "*la belle France*" once more!! We had to run from our car to the train and found ourselves assigned to third class carriages for the night's run to Paris. Most of the crowd were highly resentful and their attitude of expecting all sorts of consideration at this time was very amusing to me. There was a French "poilu" who was returning from his "permission," in the car with us. He told us much of life in the trenches and the effect of talking with a man who has lived under these terrible conditions for three years, and still is, is very different from anything we experience in America when talking to representatives that come from this side. And now I have something perfectly awful to tell you!! Why is it that just this sort of thing always happens to me? Just as we were all enjoying some of the "poilu's" lunch, and sharing with him some of ours, I suddenly thought of my passport! When I felt for it, it was not in my pocket where I had last put it while on the boat! Of course we all hunted high and low and nowhere was it to be found. It must have been lost at one of three places, either when we were getting off the boat in that terrible crush, or when we had to run for the train or at the station of Libourne where we got off and where I remember stooping over to drink some water. As yet I don't know what has happened to it but I have a firm conviction it will turn up. Even worse than the loss of the passport is the

loss of my letter of credit (on which I of course immediately stopped payment on getting to Paris) and some very valuable letters of introduction, Didden had been good enough to give me. In the event of not hearing soon that they have been found I will write and ask for duplicates. There were several other things in the envelope, such as baggage checks and photographs and papers of identification that the Field Service wanted, but all had either to be replaced or done without. I can't begin to tell you how thoroughly upset I was by the whole affair! Fancy being in a warring country without a passport! None knew better than I the horror of it! And I had wanted so much to fill all the requirements of the service in the quietest way possible, too. Instead, as you may imagine, I was very conspicuous and had to spend most of my time in Paris trying to explain how I had met with this loss, and doing all in my power to replace it! Needless to say I didn't sleep a wink that night.

## PARIS

The dawn in France was lovely beyond words! It seems to me no one realizes the beauty of the French country! We came up through Angoulême, Tours, Orleans, and finally arrived at about nine-thirty A. M. at the quai D'Orsay in Paris. Paris, *cité de joie!!!* Strange as it may seem I wasn't in the least thrilled at getting there. It seemed as if I had just left there, and the drive out to the Rue Raynouard had the familiarity of something seen the day before. Our quarters out there are really magnificent. The house is old and spacious, and there must be about ten acres of ground running clear down to the Seine. Temporary sheds or barracks have been built in the garden and it is there the men sleep. I went at once to the Embassy and reported my loss. They wanted to make a search before issuing a new passport and so telegraphed the *chef de gare* and also the Consul at Bordeaux. I am sure it will be found somehow and I'm sure we would know now only that everything is so slow here on account of war conditions. I had several other commissions to attend to and that day had my first of ambulance driver's rations. We are given tin mess kits, containing two tin plates, a cup, a knife, fork and spoon. Lunch consisted of meat, potatoes, bread, water and a peach. (I was too

excited then to sigh for the St. Francis!) After lunch there was roll call, drill and a sort of conference with the new comers. Then it was my turn to take one of the men to the doctor and explain to him what the French doctor had said on the boat (this is just one of the disadvantages of speaking French). After that, though, I was free and having telephoned Mrs. ——— earlier in the day, called at her hotel. The accompanist was there and so I had the wonderful pleasure of hearing her sing. Her improvement is simply extraordinary and the possibilities of her voice are really orchestral. Late in the afternoon I went down to the café de la Paix and it was hard to believe there was really a war. Paris is far more beautiful than ever, if a bit more serious. I have not seen any *mutilés*, and the number in mourning does not seem very great. Women are working everywhere, on the street cars and in the railway stations. There, they carry the baggage just as the *facteurs* used to and I assure you they do it with a grace and efficiency that ought to make men feel ashamed. They seem to resent men wanting to help them, and it made me wonder if this war might not bring about an absolute freeing of woman. There is little else to remind one of the war, save the two meatless days a week, the two sugarless or tealess ones, and the five hot-waterless ones, for now only on Saturday and Sunday is it possible to have hot water for bathing. Transportation is a lot easier than I had expected, and all of the theatres seem to be open. Paul met us at LaRue for dinner, at which he was host. We had had dinner, or rather lunch there, my last day in Paris three years ago, and now that I was back those three years seemed just like a dream. Paul has just been *reformé* after fifteen months in Ann Morgan's hospital at Versailles. "After dark" Paris is relatively dark compared with what it used to be, but it is in no way depressing.

The next day, we were told at the Rue Raynouard, that we would be expected to start out to camp the day after. I would have done anything to linger in Paris a few days, but it was impossible. All Thursday morning went to the headquarters getting equipment and baggage in readiness and in the afternoon I started out to make some calls. I found Alexandre away at the sea-shore *en permission*, with his family. He is now automobilist and con-

sequently in considerably less danger than before. *Dieu en soit loué!* To my great joy and surprise I found Girouard at home on a twenty-four hour *permission*. *Quelle délicatesse!* He looks wonderfully, and has been right in the heavy fighting from the start. At present he is near Rheims. It was the first time I had had the pleasure of meeting his mother, who is a very charming French woman. From there I went to see Paul who has taken an atelier on the Rue Pontoise. He has the finest view of Paris that I have ever seen or can possibly imagine. It is right on the Seine back of Notre Dame. Kelly had asked me for tea, so I had to hurry there. His place is superb, too, and he has it most charmingly arranged. He expects to leave for America very shortly, in fact waited over to see me. We went to dinner together at one of those little garden restaurants in which Paris abounds, out on the Rue de la Pompe. I had forgotten to mention the war bread, which is one other thing that keeps us always reminded of the times in which we live. It is impossible to get white bread of any sort. This kind resembles more our whole wheat bread, and evidently means a saving in wheat. The taste is quite agreeable. I had hoped to get in to see the Andrés and Sister Marie Pia, Friday morning, but I was kept so busy, between the embassy, the gare D'Orsay, and the Rue Raynouard, that I didn't have time for anything. I will write them though from here, and will see them on my return to Paris, in a few weeks.

#### AT THE FRONT

We left Paris on Friday afternoon, August 24, at six P. M. and arrived where we are, about forty kilometers northeast of Paris, at eight-thirty. We are really delightfully located here in an old flour mill, just adjoining a typical farm house. The country is lovely as only French country can be, and we are allowed a great deal of liberty in between hours. Coming out on the train there were several German prisoners on board. I had a chance to talk with some of them at one of the stations. They looked very tired and seemed glad to have been taken. There was also on the train a French soldier of only twenty-one, who had gone mad as the result of a gas attack. It seems this gas does very often affect the sanity of those inhaling it.

The regime of the day here is as follows: We get up at six!!! Roll call at six-thirty, breakfast at seven. At eight o'clock we drill until ten. From ten to eleven-thirty we have driving practice. Lunch is at eleven-thirty, and we have driving again at one o'clock until three. From four to five we drill again, and then there is free time until dinner at six-thirty, after which we are free until nine-thirty, when everyone must be in bed. So far getting up has not been very hard, but I would appreciate some of you in California thinking of me at ten P. M. when my day here is just beginning. The meals are wholesome and good enough. I remember wanting to taste of the hardship prisoners and soldiers endured and my wish has been granted. We are in the open air so much of the time that everyone has a great appetite for food and sleep, and there is much more to be had of the latter. I have often thought of my complaints against the meals at college. I have learned much since then. Drill has not been nearly as hard here as it promised to be on the boat. We have two French officers to command us, and all the French ask is a little good will. Their consideration is really wonderful, and their attitude makes everything easy. In regard to driving, we have some gear shift cars and other Fords. I have had lessons on both, and have done fairly well though I certainly have sighed for my dear "N. S." with its wonderfully responsive engine. Our free time is spent in various ways. One afternoon we went swimming, and there are several towns at a distance of a few kilometers that we are free to visit. The nearby farm house is very popular, as eggs and confitures can be ordered there. Sunday was a free day, and almost all of us attended the late Mass at the nearest church, which is a building of the fifteenth century. It was thrilling to hear that French congregation, in answering the prayers for the dead, say "*Et, pardonnez nous nos offenses, comme nous pardonnons a ceux,*" etc., and to realize all it had to mean to each one of them. In September, 1914, just about three years ago now, the Germans came all through this part. In fact it was from here they made the retreat of the Marne. Sunday we visited trenches and a dug-out for observation that they had built, and judging from the perfection of the workmanship displayed therein, it is little wonder the Allies have had such

trouble dislodging them from more permanent entrenchments. Of course this country rings with tales of loot and murder perpetrated by them, but there is little evident damage. In fact I must say again at times it is hard to believe there is a war at all! We are about thirty miles from the front, but we have been able to hear quite distinctly at times the cannonading and bombardment; in fact, as I write the guns are hammering away. Is it not unbelievable? To think that I only left you all three weeks ago, and that now I am here! The heavy bombardment always causes rain it seems, and we have had some heavy down-pours which has made it hard in the primitive surroundings. (Aunt Ma, try and picture "Beau Lieu" en route to Lourdes in the rain and you will have a picture of this place). Our beds are warm and comfortable, and we are all getting used to the flies and mosquitoes and rats—not red ones, however, and not too numerous.

One other Californian and myself are the only ones of our crowd who are here, though there are about forty ambulance drivers. The others all preferred to drive trucks for ammunition and the like, and so we parted Friday morning. They are in a camp a little way up here near Soissons. I miss the Wilson brothers about whom I wrote you all, more than anyone else, and next to them Cosmo Morgan. The Wilsons are still in Paris, so I will see them on my return. The young fellow who is here is named Ricks; he was one of Diddens' friends in the northern part of California. Ward developed a terrible toothache on the boat and was obliged to stay a week in Paris having it doctored. The other young fellow who was ill, was obliged to go home at once.

There are several regiments "*au repos*" (resting) around here. I have talked with many of the men and almost all are hopeful that the war will soon be over. They say in the recent attacks they have encountered boys of 15 and 16 principally, and many men over 50. Some of them say it is up to America to do what she can next spring. I wonder if it will ever come to that! Surely everyone must be dead tired of the whole thing by now.

Our plans here are indefinite. There is no set time for the course. Some go through quickly and it takes others a long time. Everyone then goes to Paris, and some are kept there driving

ambulances, and others are sent out nearer the front. But wherever it is there is very little danger, so please don't worry about me. Only rest assured that I miss you all very very much and I am nearer homesick than I have ever been before. I'm sure though the work and regularity and even the promptitude are going to do me a lot of good in every way, and every one here tells me I look stronger and better each day. I had forgotten to mention the drivers themselves. Most of them are a fine set of men and very easy to get along with. It makes me wonder why I had such hard luck at school, and if it is that now I have changed! I have been writing this seated on my bed. There is a piano in the room which is played or pounded all during our free time. I only mention this by way of apology for the many mistakes I have made in writing. There have been many interruptions too, but next time I will try to do better. I intend to send a letter like this once each week and hope it won't be too long in reaching you.

With very best love and assuring you that my thoughts are with you always.

Ever your devoted,

NÖEL.

P. S.—I had forgotten to mention the aeroplanes which have gotten to be so numerous since the war. The sky around here is at times almost encumbered with them and no one pays any attention to them at all any more.

This organization has up to the present been a part of the French Government, but I understand that now it is to be federalized and taken over by the American Government. This will mean among other things that each man has a chance to be an officer and every man will be salaried. I am really quite excited at the prospect of earning something!



*Sunday, September 2, 1917.*

*Dearest Everyone:—*

Here it is Sunday again, and as I intend to write you each week on this day, at least when it is possible, I must start my letter though there isn't very much news. It was four weeks yesterday since we left San Francisco, and three weeks today since we sailed from New York, and the whole thing has happened so suddenly, it seems to me at times as if I had died and were transferred to some other planet, for everything is very strange and new here, and I have been entirely out of touch with the world heretofore known to me for the last ten days! Some of the men received letters last week, dated from New York as late as the fourteenth of August, so I don't suppose I'll have to wait very much longer for news. We don't even get the newspapers here and it makes one feel very "*éloigné*." I hope you will all return good for evil, and write to me often. I assure you your letters will be most welcome!

#### ENLISTS FOR THE WAR

The week here, or at least the days since last I wrote you have passed very uneventfully. I think I mentioned in my last letter, at the very end that there was much talk of the probability of the U. S. Army taking over the Field Service, and it is now an accomplished fact. Two U. S. officers arrived Tuesday afternoon, and made the proposition to us. A great many of the men wanted to enlist, and others hesitated for various reasons. As far as I was concerned I couldn't see that it mattered one way or the other, and the idea of earning a salary, no matter how small (it is \$33.00 a month) appealed to me very much! I passed the physical examination without any trouble at all, and I hope this will be reassuring news for those that think me delicate. As a matter of fact I wouldn't have minded being turned down for some reason or another, as I was as homesick as could be that particular day, and the duration of the war seemed in all probability a long period. Of course I told the officer who signed us up, just how I felt about war, and explained why I had chosen this branch of the service. He seemed to feel that my love for France and the French made up for all the other qualities in which I was wanting, and was willing to accept me

into the medical department of the army, which in the last analysis is no different to what the Field Service stood for before. We have now exactly the same rank as the Allentown men, only with the additional honor of being the first men ever signed up in the American army on French territory. There is no possibility of our being used in any other branch of the army either. That point he made very clear, and we are enlisted just for the duration of the war, which corresponds exactly with our term of service with the other organization. (It is up to everyone who wants me home soon to pray for the war to end soon!) We are still to serve the French army exclusively, and nothing in connection with the way the service has heretofore been run, will be in any way altered.

#### CAMP LIFE

The week has passed pretty slowly in one way, though in another way it doesn't seem ten days since we came here. I don't think I realized before, how full my life was of variety and interest! Here there really isn't enough to do, and at home I never had time enough to do half of the things I wanted to do. And then, too, it is hard not being entirely free! I never realized before what liberty must mean to the prisoner! It is of little wonder that he so often abuses it. I hope you won't think from all of this that I am in any way unhappy here, or that I regret having come, for it is quite the contrary. I am sure the experience will do me a lot of good, and I could not bear to be doing anything but helping France at this moment now that I see her real need. I wish someone would send me a copy of the Pope's peace message. Everyone here is talking of it, but as it must have been published while we were on the water, I haven't been able to get any record of it.

In my last letter I wrote you of the day's routine. It has been the same this week, but I have had guard duty, which has kept me in quite a bit. One day our commanding officer made *me* take command of the men! (Fr. Perrin, ask Follie what she thinks happened!) It was the most terrible thing you can possibly imagine! All the commands are given in French here and a week ago I didn't know the first of them, even in English! I think per-

haps Glad will appreciate better than anyone else what it was like. It has certainly increased my respect for orchestral leaders, who manage to guide and direct so many men through so many intricacies!

Some of us have walked to the nearby town almost every evening after supper (we have averaged about ten miles walking each day, counting march). The nights have been too lovely, with full moon—and the country is like what Verlaine might have written about, or Cadenasso described in pastel—not that I mean to compare them at all!—(only, of course, minus the mist that he usually insinuates into his pictures). It always seems so full of peace and calm that it is impossible to believe that within so few miles, men are killing each other!! It has been wonderfully interesting to talk to the soldiers who are resting in this little village to which we go, and if it keeps up much longer it will make a public speaker of me! I usually begin talking to one or two, but in no time a crowd comes around, and I feel the least I can do is to try and entertain them in some way or another. They regard me as a sort of curiosity coming from so far away, and ask lots of very amusing questions. They are mostly interested in American politics, and I hate to think of all the incorrect information I have unwittingly given them as to how the President is elected, etc.!! They are all lovely and simple, and far more gentle than one would think it possible for soldiers to be. There are a great many radicals among them, too. One, who could read English was a great admirer of Emma Goldman, and shook my hand very warmly when I told him I had met her. The world is small, is it not! I wish I could tell you just a few of the many interesting, and some terrible things they have told me!! One young fellow to whom I was talking was one of the eight alive out of a company of two hundred that made an attack at Verdun! Since the war began he has been wounded eight times. Another was telling me of a German prisoner who died from his wounds, shortly after being taken. He was the sixth son of his mother to die for the fatherland! These wonderful soldiers seem to feel very little bitterness against their enemies, and all long for the war to cease! There are some terrible stories abroad of German abuses in this neighborhood. Most of the

inhabitants left here at the time of the invasion, but the nuns, to whose convent (a hospital) we go for hot baths and who stayed through the time of occupation received the most courteous of treatment at the hands of the invaders. We heard the other day of an English officer, who seeing a wounded German hanging from the barbed-wire on "No Man's Land" stepped out under shrapnel fire, and carried him to the German trench. The German officer was so touched by this act of kindness that he took off the iron cross that he was wearing and pinned it on the Englishman! And the soldiers all tell us of exchanging cigarettes with Germans and of the existence of very friendly relations between the trenches!

The hot baths which I referred to above as if they were very ordinary things, were as a matter of fact the event of the week. (I don't know why I should put all this in the plural for we only found the place Friday and had to give twenty-four hours' notice before we could get a bath, so that only allowed us time for one!) (Can you imagine what some of our friends would do here?) It was a wonderful treat I can assure you, as here the accommodation even for washing is very primitive, and the only attempted substitute for bathing is in going for a swim in the stream, and few are brave enough to face the cold water and the mosquitoes! I hope all this doesn't sound as if I were complaining for I really don't mean to do that at all. I am sure this experience is going to be most useful to me always. How much I will appreciate a relatively soft bed when I next occupy one, no one can know!! Nor how good it will feel to lie between sheets with a pillow under my head and know that there is no possibility of waking up and finding a large gray rat crawling across the blankets!!

(Monday morning). We had early dinner last night, at five o'clock, and afterwards all went over to "the nearby town" to hear the Military band concert which was very fine. Just after it some of us went into a little café for drinks and took seats around a large table. There were several places left vacant and after a few moments some of the black troops from Madagascar came in and took them. There was a Southerner at the table with us who was so incensed that he sprang up and ran out of the place. All of the French people who seem to have no understanding of that feeling

against negroes thought he had suddenly gone mad! I didn't try to explain but said he had to be back at camp early, though inwardly I couldn't help wondering if that was the way we were going "to make the world safe for democracy!" These "Turcos" are extraordinary fighters it seems, and the Germans are very much afraid of them. They only use knives in battle and are absolutely fearless. Later last evening we went to a hall where several hundred soldiers were congregated and I sang for them my usual repertoire. "Obstination" which was the only French song I know without my notes, made a great hit, in fact, I have never been so applauded. It is wonderful to hear the French sing the Marseillaise! I don't know why it is that their patriotism makes an appeal to me and is comprehensible in a way that no other is. Their country seems to justify their loving her almost inordinately!

Yesterday morning I went over to Mass early and waited for the "Grand Messe." It was unusually impressive as a "poilu" (soldier) priest said Mass and preached. The sermon was on the gospel of "Consider the Lilies of the Field" and though a non-militarist would have interpreted it very differently, this man's ideas were truly beautiful and appropriate. I am told that the priests are principally "*brancardiers*" (stretcher bearers) in the French army, and doesn't it seem a very typical rôle for them? It is extremely perilous, you know, and yet they are able to give so much more than any one else could to the dying! There were many in mourning in church yesterday and many tears were being shed on all sides. Just after the "Agnus Dei," the choir and Congregation started to sing "Parce, Domine, parce, popolo tuo!" ("Spare, O Lord, spare thy people!") in the most pleading tone and I felt almost as if I were going to faint of sheer emotion. It was a different church to the one I attended last Sunday and the number of soldiers there added a something that one could only experience in a warring country!

Everything else has gone on just about the same. Today brought me a letter from Mr. André, and the other day one came from the American Embassy saying nothing had been heard from my lost envelope. But I have not given up hoping yet; things

happen slowly in France at the present time. I will have to ask that this letter be sent around just as the last one was. Before the next I expect to get to Paris and there I can get the extra carbons. All or most of the men here are exceedingly nice and improve on acquaintance. (Fr. Perrin will be interested to know that one of them, a Bostonian, is a great friend of the Mr. Holmes whose article in the "Masses" we both liked so much. He is a Unitarian Minister it seems.) I think I told you that we have a piano here in the dormitory and my singing of "All Through the Night" has gotten to be a regular nightly institution before taps. I never sing it without thinking of all of you and wishing I were near you!!! The New York Herald of today quoted Wall street as predicting that war would be over in December and I suppose if Wall street wants it to end, it surely will. Heaven grant it anyhow!

My very best love to all of you!

Your ever devoted

NÖEL.

*"Somewhere in France,"*

*September 9, 1917.*

*Admission Day in California!*

#### CHANGING CAMPS

*Dearest Everyone:—*

There is much to tell you this time after my first days at the front and I only wish I were equal to it! But it is hard to make a record of one's mood when it is constantly changing or of one's impressions when they are drowned in a sea of most intense emotion.

Just after I had finished my letter to you last Monday I heard at the camp that several men were to be sent out the next day to a section of Gear shift cars, and a little later in the day was told that I was to be one of them. Five of us started off the next morning for Paris, only knowing that from there we would be directed how to get to our destination which was to be section sixty-five. I really felt very sorry to leave the camp for many of the men there were exceedingly nice and I had the feeling in going that I would often sigh for the peace and quiet of the place. I was glad however to be on my way to see some of the real things of the hour, and was glad, too, to have the moving take place just one month to the day after leaving home.

It was a very tiresome trip into Paris. I was surprised to see we were as much as a hundred kilometers away, and to stand for that distance on a slow moving train is no particular fun. It was way after noon before we got up to the Rue Raynouard, and several hours passed before we could get away from there with the disconcerting information that instead of having at least a few days in Paris as I had hoped, we would have to leave early the next morning for somewhere on the Aisne front! I realized right away that there was no time for any of the calls that I had hoped to make and I just managed to do a bit of necessary shopping before closing time. I am ashamed to confess to you how terribly good dinner tasted *chez Henri* that night even though it was a meatless and sugarless day in Paris! It was wonderful, too, to renew my acquaintance with a real bed which I did at a very early hour in a

little hotel out near the Etoile, though since coming here I can't help reproaching myself for having revived the memory.

We all met at the Rue Raynouard early that next morning, that is the five of us, Carson Ricks from California, a man from Honolulu, a man from Tennessee named Knowlton, who, by the way, more than a year ago, when himself a student at Cambridge, was asked by Mr. Maginnis to join his office force to do detail work for a convent in California. (I will refrain from the usual comment about the size of the world). The other member of our party besides myself, is a terrible bore from New York. (There is a man named Cauldwell here who was evidently the "sous chef" some little time ago. He has just left the section now but every thing that isn't just as it should be is blamed on to him. Things echo far some times, do they not?) The trip was evidently too long or the train accommodation too poor for us to make the trip in one day, so we broke it by stopping over at Chateau Thierry for the night. We arrived there at one-thirty in the afternoon and had the rest of the day to look over the town which is a very lovely one. There is a chateau there situated far above the town and approached graded walk under shaded trees. The view of the valley from the summit is superb, as is the fifteenth century Gothic Cathedral of the town. Everything was quiet and dark after night-fall, the lines not being very far away, so we retired early again and started off at eight the next morning on another tiresome trip with many changes and waits and no seats, that brought us to a railway stop about ten kilometers from our ultimate destination. There we were met by a FIAT machine, the same sort as we use for ambulances, and, driving over, we each had our first lesson in running it. We reached the cantonment in a heavy rainstorm which didn't enhance the beauty of our surroundings. They are in fact very primitive, far more so than the last place we were at. Here there is a little farm house with three rooms downstairs, and a loft overhead where forty men eat and sleep. The kitchen where we go to get our food is in a small building adjoining. The food here is more plentiful and somewhat more varied than at our former camp and we sleep on stretchers which are not at all uncomfortable.



## IN ACTION

The first night I was here I was assigned to an ambulance which started out about eight o'clock for the "*poste de secours*." There are always two men on each car and the machines themselves are very good with demountable rims and every facility for saving time in case of a puncture or blow-out. In fact, there is a double tire on the back wheels which enables you to run with one tire flat until there is ample time to change it. Of course, at night we always drive without lights and that is at first hard to get used to. Everyone said that it was unusually quiet as we drove up to the *poste*, and though I found it hard to believe then, I have since realized it was true. The *poste* itself is situated about five hundred yards from the last line of trenches, and the wounded, who are first tended there are carried here after the attack and when it is considered safe, and after their wounds are looked at again by the doctor in charge here, we bring them to the field hospitals from where, in turn, those seriously enough injured are evacuated to the base hospitals. We are about as safe as anyone could possibly be in service that is in any way active. We never "roll" (that is the word used here meaning "drive") until after the attack is over. The *poste* where we stay when on duty (there are several similar—I have only been to the one) is a subterranean cave quite like the Roman catacombs. It is brightly lit by electricity and is almost cozy. There are eight men from the French Red Cross always on duty and they received us with the hospitality one is accustomed to here in France. There was little action that night and no wounded were brought in until the next morning. I consequently managed to get quite a few hours of sleep without undressing, of course. Early that next morning they started carrying in the wounded and if any one ever doubted the truth of Sherman's definition of war, it is surely not then! There were two other cars here on duty that went out before mine, so I only had one "blésse" to carry to a hospital about five miles away. His skull was perforated with a shell but he was conscious and wonderfully brave. Some of them, they say, moan and cry, but he never uttered a sound! I assure you no one knows how badly he drives until he tries to carry a wounded man *doucement* and in as short a time as possible

over these rough roads. We returned to the *poste* right after lunch (each man has forty-eight hours' duty and then forty-eight hours' rest, though during the latter he is always liable to be called for special work) and nothing eventful happened all afternoon. At about five, aviators from both sides started to make flights and each side in turn shelled the enemy air man. When French shrapnel explodes it makes a cloud of white smoke, whereas the German is always black. The men here who have been in the war from the start tell me that they have never seen an avion brought down in this way, so they regard the firing more as a sport than anything else.

#### AN INTERLUDE

From up here we have to walk about half a mile to where we have dinner. Returning from there I noticed a little sign saying "chapelle" with a cross above it, and going into the chapel, which was in a cave very like our *poste*, I found that they were just about to have Benediction. There was a little organ there, but no one to play it, so I volunteered, and stumbled through the service as best I could from memory, and the soldiers sang really thrillingly. Just in the midst of it the Germans opened an attack, and the French artillery, which is situated way back of us here, replied with great energy. It happened to be the First Friday, and the celebrant recited the litany of the S. H., but no one could hear him. The only thing I heard was the invocation "*Desir des collines eternelles*" and the vision it evoked, of the lovely watch tower at Carmel, named after it, seemed to be of an entirely different world! At the end everyone sang "*Pitie, Mon Dieu, c'est pour la patrie!*" (Glad used to sing it at Menlo) and presently the bombardment ceased, and we were able to leave our place of shelter.

After dark, as is the custom, there was another artillery duel, both sides sending up much barrage fire, and for sheer spectacular magnificence, I cannot imagine anything more wonderful. Compared with it the volcano on Hawaii is almost commonplace! If only we could divorce it from the terrible intent back of it all, and from its probable result in dead and wounded! One of the greatest tragedies of this whole war lies in the fact that no one thinks. Just yesterday I heard one of our drivers, over here to do a work

of mercy, say that he hoped there would be lots of wounded to carry that day, because it was such a bore to sit around doing nothing! ! ! and, no one seemed to think he had wished for anything out of the ordinary! ! It is so pathetic to see how the French people yearn for peace! They are really peace-loving, and want for nothing more! Of course they have the highest possible hopes for America, though every German prisoner that is taken assures them that the Submarine is still mistress of the seas, and that it will be impossible for America to send either troops or ammunition. This is evidently what the German people are being told, and it may in some way account for their patience.

Strange to say, after this apparently huge attack there were no wounded at all, and so, after a practically sleepless night, we drove back to the cantonment when another car came up to relieve us at nine o'clock. Then this ambulance had to be washed and oiled and gone over, before our forty-eight hours of work was done. There is fortunately a hot shower bath in the village that is at the disposal of our men, and it felt almost like home to be able to have one, get on fresh clothes, and look forward to spending a night undressed and in bed. I didn't linger very much getting there that evening I can assure you, and was just settling down for the night, when another big attack opened up, and orders were telephoned from headquarters for every man to be ready to "roll" on a moment's notice. We all dressed, and a little later the whistle blew warning everyone to wear his mask, as the Germans were using gas-bombs! I forgot to tell you that as soon as we reached the cantonment we were given these, along with steel helmets, worn by all the "poilus" and with them in hand we waited for several hours, even after the attack had subsided. Most of the cars were called out, but not the one that I was on, so about one o'clock I lay down again and had a few hours' sleep. The next day in going about I would notice the remains of the gas. It is disgustingly sweet like over ripe fruit, and is very hard to treat because it affects almost every "*asfixié*" differently.

The next day was Sunday, and I went to High Mass and Vespers, at the parish church of the village, which is just across the way from our farm house. It is very like a California mission, and is cruder architecturally than anything I have seen in France of

that period. The soldiers of the "chasseur" regiment that are now resting in our village sang the services all by heart. It was the first time I had attended Vespers in many years. The organist waited to play a little while after Vespers and I asked him if I might sing a bit. I had a few sacred songs with me, including the "Ave Maria" I sang the day Carmel was dedicated, and also "O Salutaris," and I have never found half as much real solace in singing as then. The organist who is an officer here "en repos," wants me to sing Sunday, but I think we may have moved away by then ourselves. You see we are attached to one special army division. As long as they are in the trenches we serve them, and when they go "en repos" we follow them too. In this particular part of the line the French have advanced about a mile since the war began, and I am sure every inch of it has been dearly paid for.

I am looking forward most eagerly to receiving letters from home, and hate to think that it is only about now that you are getting my steamer letters. It will be better though from now on, as each week will bring some word in each direction I hope. The men in this section all seem to be very nice, but were too united before our arrival to welcome any new comers very cordially. In future I think mail will come more quickly if addressed to "S. S. U. 65., Convois autos, par B. C. M., Paris." They say, too, small packages may be sent in the same way, and if any of you would care about risking a small box of candy, it would be most welcome. Just now I can't imagine anything more acceptable than a peppermint lozenge!

I will have to ask you to forward this letter as usual, for though I have the carbon paper I don't yet know how to use it. Please be indulgent with me, for I have to write under all sorts of difficulties, and with continual interruptions. Most of this has been typed sitting in my ambulance, and waiting for *bléssés* up at the poste, with many Senegalian troops watching me, and making all sorts of comments.

Sunday night, I was forgetting to tell you, I had a very good night's sleep and was able to undress, and last night though I was on call and couldn't undress, I was not disturbed once. We took some wounded to a hospital about fifteen miles from here late

yesterday afternoon and there is my news up to date. Nothing else of any importance has happened.

Please don't forget me, and every time you think of me please make the thought a prayer that peace may soon return to the world, and that it will remain forever.

For myself I am well, and everyone who saw me in Paris thought that my week of hard work and mild fasting had done me a world of good. I know I can't but benefit by the experience, for previously I never half appreciated what was given me, never realizing what the other side of the picture was like. You have all spoiled me, but I love you for it, and now I do want to show you, if I can, that I was worth it. Just think of me being in a place where money hardly has any value at all, and is difficult to spend! ! ! Now that I am really earning too ! ! ! You see every thing has its funny side, and the "poilus" certainly help us to see it.

Before closing for this time I want to give you all a copy of a poem by the Hindu, Dhan Murkerji, which has said itself over and over again in my heart these last days. He addresses it to the God in our own souls, and God to the Buddhist is feminine. Catholics, though, can give it a very devotional interpretation, addressing it to the Blessed Virgin. To me, it is one of the most beautiful things I know.

"Arise, O Mother, lo dawns the day;  
 Arise! Dispel the shadows that seek to stay;  
 Lead us from night to light—  
 Lead us to peace pulsating and white;  
 Arise, O Mother, with love and knowledge and might;  
 Lead us from word into meaning;  
 Lead us from wonders to new wonders of singing;  
 Lead us from ingratitude to gratitude,  
 From pain, to Thy beatitude;  
 From sound, into soul's silence—solitude.  
 Peace—peace—peace—  
 As night falls asleep.  
 Peace! Let thy silence rise—  
 May silence speak."

I am sorry to have written it down so badly, but at least you will know what is often in my thoughts, and the prayer, if not always so poetically expressed, that is ever in my heart.

With devoted love,

Always Yours,  
 NÖEL.

*Still "Somewhere in France,"*  
*September 17, 1917.*

EXPERIENCES AT THE FRONT

*Dearest Everyone:—*

As I was late in sending off my letter of last week, I have not been in a particular hurry to get this one on its way for there hasn't been very much to write about in the past few days. I hope you have had word from me each week at least, and think that by sending letters the first part of the week they are pretty liable to have gotten by the censor and ready to go on their way across the ocean by the boat which leaves on Saturdays. I hope, too, that someone will keep the letters for me, as, with the exception of a very few lines which I try to write each day in my diary, they are the only record I will have of these days, and sometime they might be interesting to look over. They will be of particular interest as reference in the event of my ever learning how to spell or construct a grammatical sentence correctly!

This last week has passed very quickly indeed—in fact, our forty-eight hour days (for that is the time from when we go on duty to when we come off) make it seem no time since last I wrote you. A great deal of that time has been spent up at the "*poste de secours*," and there has been considerable night duty. You would all be proud of me though to see how readily I awake at the first word from the "*brancardier*," in fact I feel so much more ready to get up at two A. M. than at eight A. M., that I think when I go home I will have to make that my regular hour for rising! It is a lot more agreeable to be around the cantonment than up at the *poste*, for at the latter place we fare just as the French Army does, and I assure you it is nothing to boast of. In the morning we are just given a cup of black coffee and breakfast isn't served until eleven. The other day a horse was accidentally killed by a French machine gun, and the butchers immediately took charge of his remains; the consequence being that everyone had a very generous helping of meat. (It was one of the Fridays on which I didn't mind in the least being a catholic, though the army, by the way, are all allowed to eat meat.) I mailed my last letter to you Tuesday afternoon (I was on duty then from Monday morning until Wed-

nesday morning) and at two A. M. we had a call and a long drive in the starlight to one of the hospitals. During the next few days when I was off duty nothing of importance happened to me. I wrote many letters, so if you hear of people who haven't heard from me in years, receiving them, don't be surprised. I am determined this time to pay all my debts in that regard and *never* allow them to accumulate again. Much as I loathe writing, it really takes too much of the joy out of life always to be owing letters and I never again want to have to face any such lists as have confronted me on the trip to Honolulu, and again since leaving San Francisco. I have attended the Benediction services every evening at the church when I have been able to, and evidently the volume of my voice and my familiarity with the words of the liturgy and hymns attracted the attention of the organist, who happened to be an elderly officer of the regiment resting in our town. Wednesday morning he asked me to sing a duet with a tenor (an officer of the same regiment) on the Sunday following at Mass. The piece which he had was a "Veni Creator" of Caesar Franc and one of the most beautiful sacred songs I have ever heard. I am terribly sorry not to have had it for the Dedication of Carmel. At any rate we had several very good rehearsals, and some most interesting musical talks (this officer knew Wagner when he was in Paris in the early sixties); but Saturday night his regiment was called away so we never had the opportunity to render the duet in public.

#### A WOUNDED MAN

Friday morning I went on duty again and was on the go almost constantly until Sunday. In that time I went to a number of new *postes* I had not seen before and am gradually becoming familiar with the country. The last run I made was Sunday morning at one-thirty, and the man, or one of them, that I carried had been terribly wounded and was in frightful pain. His hip, I believe, had been dislocated and the leg fractured, besides being wounded in many other places. The roads we were obliged to travel were very rough, and the darkness made it almost impossible to miss the ruts. Of course he cried and moaned most pathetically the entire way, and I was nearly beside myself. I think (in spite

of my claiming to have sweat blood at my bankers occasionally) I was really never as near it before in all my life; and when we reached the hospital my arms and shoulders were almost paralyzed from trying to hold the machine steady on the road. Before they took my patient out of the ambulance, I told him how my heart had bled at the sound of his cries, and how diligently, if futilely, I had tried to drive carefully. I will never forget his answer, for my concern seemed really to touch him—“*Ce n'est pas contre vous cher camarade que je cri, mais contre cette guerre!*” I have not been to the hospital where I left him since, so don't know his fate, but I can't help hoping that his soul has found peace in some world that knows nothing of war!

One of the men of this section saw the Cathedral of Rheims the other day and gave a most encouraging account of its appearance. Only about one-fifth of the rose window, according to him, was broken, and the general effect of the building on all but one side was very good. Some of the French soldiers who came in from the first line trenches in this vicinity the other day told of the Germans putting up a sign on their side with the announcement on it that there was civil war in Russia and that the end of the war was at hand. I am wondering if that means that they have just now learned of the revolution last March, or if it is some announcement of a similar occurrence in Germany. Would to Heaven that it were! For the French, certainly, all the novelty of war has worn away, and at best, in and out of the trenches, it is just unspeakable boredom and monotony. They expect great things of America and look forward to the day when our troops take their place in the trenches. Many of the uneducated “poilus” seem to feel that then they can return to their homes! From what I have heard around here of the French and German artilleries, the former is far superior and is infinitely more generous with its shells. An officer was telling us the other day that they have orders to fire on the Germans six times for each time that they fire. The afternoon activity of aviators is the most evident break in the monotony of the day. Yesterday (Sunday) there were dozens of air men and many observation balloons (the French call them “*saucices*”) up from both sides, and as soon as a German machine would fly over



this way, the French would signal by means of a bugle call, so that everyone would seek shelter in the "*abris*." It seems the idea is not to let the Germans know how many people are in the neighborhood, or where they are located for it would be the custom of our unfriendly neighbor to shell that place immediately were he to make the discovery. I suppose the same thing applies on the other side too.

#### A LITTLE CHILD

There is a little child, I think four years old, in the village where we are. There are very few civilians there and only two or three women, and this little one has a few companions of about the same age. She, however, is strangely precocious and seems really to have a grasp of the situation. She was practically born and has spent all her life within sound of the cannon's roar, and has seen more wounded men probably than any other kind. Her only toys are old gas masks and bits of shrapnel, and it is the most tragic thing in the world to see this somber little figure walking about alone, thoroughly distressed by the whole situation. Like almost all children, she is frightened to death of me, but some of the soldiers who have talked with her, tell me that she says all the time "*Quel drôle de monde*" as if she had a distinct remembrance of some more peaceful habitation.

By degrees I am becoming better acquainted with the men in the section and learning all sorts of interesting things about it and them. It is divided against itself in the strangest sort of way, and has two distinct parties in it. At first I wasn't in any sense aware of this and thought everyone very united. The section has already been cited and has received the "*croix de guerre*" for valor. It seems however that there are some pathological cowards in its midst who simply refuse to run any risks at all, and when they are asked to, go to work and put their cars out of commission in the most obvious way possible. In a few days, though, the entire section is going to be changed and placed on another part of the line. A number of the men are returning home and others are going into other branches of the service, and we are to have Ford cars instead of Fiats. I only relish the change, because, in moving, we may pass through Paris and have a few days there.

In the course of this letter I was interrupted and had to come from the cantonment up to the *poste*. Here I have been entertaining the "*brancardiers*" (one of them is a priest) on the subject of Christian Science. It was the first time any one of them heard of the sect (that would be "the most unkindest cut of all" to Scientists!) and their mirth is great in figuring out what a C. S. denying the existence of matter would do by the side of a "Boche" high explosive!

Just now as I write there is great excitement. The French machine guns have brought down two German aeroplanes that were flying very low over the trenches. Had I not been writing (or using *my* machine gun, as the Senegalise call this "Corona") I would have seen it, but I can't say I am sorry. I only hope the "Boche" is not hurt, but simply taken prisoner.

It is getting rather dark and I find it hard to see, so will close for this time. It is interesting after dark to watch them telegraphing by means of light signals. The code changes constantly, but tonight one of the drivers who can read the Morris system, claims to be able to read the messages.

The only news I have forgotten to tell you is that the food was better this week than last, and we have discovered the Aisne to be a wonderful place to bathe in the warm sunlight.

I think of you all always and my dearest wish is that you are all well.

With very best love,  
Yours devoted

NÖEL.

P. S.—I hope nothing I have said regarding some of the men in the section will give anyone reason to believe they are all by any means that way. There are a great number that are really courageous and take their work as a very serious vocation, and though none of them interest me particularly as personalities, they have all been very friendly to me.

*"Somewhere else in France"*

*September 24, 1917.*

WASTEFUL ORGANIZATION

*Dearest Everyone:—*

Here another week has rolled by since I last wrote you, and it is again very hard to realize it, though much has happened and there is much to tell. I think I finished that last letter at the "*poste*," where I stayed all night, coming back to the cantonment the next morning without carrying any wounded. We were then given formal notice of what had been rumored about for the days previous, that we were to go *au repos* via Paris where our section would be reorganized and where we were to be equipped with new cars (FORDS), and that we would leave the next day (Wednesday) at six A. M.

All day Tuesday was spent packing up and getting ready to leave, and you have no idea how much there is to do in connection with moving. It has certainly cast a new light on war, as an organization, as far as I am concerned, and so I will tell you a few of the details of our section, which is after all but an atom in this universe of war! At that time we had forty-four drivers, a section-chef and sous-chef, a lieutenant, a corporal and a sergeant out of the French army. Three cooks and three mechanics also drawn from the ranks (we have now only twenty-two drivers, as on the Ford there is only one man, but the rest of the personnel remains the same, only in addition to that, there is a member of the quartermaster's department that I forgot to mention). Of course everything had to be moved, and the cantonment left in absolute readiness for the incoming section, and I assure you it was not an easy job. Moreover the machines, which were to be turned in the next day had to be completely washed and cleaned, so you may imagine Tuesday was not the idlest day of my life! Through it all, and through all I saw the next day I couldn't help but think what a waste of energy from beginning to end this war is! Since we are capable of the marvelous organization of which we are giving evidence every day, why can't we use it in some other direction? Why not try to abolish some of the crying poverty we all so complacently behold, or enforce care of the sick that are dying for

want of treatment? Ideal organization, unattractive as it is, could make of this world something so different to what it is, and I suppose the only reason why it does not, is because its inspiration must be cupidity, which is not excited by the sight of the poor or of the sick! The next morning we were called at four-thirty, and at six o'clock sharp (wont it be terrible if I really become prompt?) our long convois of autos started off in procession. I am free to tell you now we had been on a pretty dangerous front near the "*chemin des dames*" which is familiar to everyone following the "*communiqués*" in the newspapers, and no one was sorry to get away from it. We drove for many hours through beautiful country, beautiful as only France can be in the early morning, and about eleven reached Chatillons which commands a superb view of the river and valley of the Marne. It is little wonder, naturally speaking that France rejoiced so, in driving the enemy out of this particular part of her country which is so typically hers. I suppose it is about as fertile as any land on earth, and its lovely villages that seem to nestle on every hillside are such a striking contrast to those one sees immediately on crossing to Germany. Just a few days ago the victory of the Marne was celebrated all through this country and particularly at Meaux. Chatillons must have been famous in crusade days, for now a huge statue of one of the popes of those times dominates the city. We weren't allowed to stop there at all, but simply left our cars at the "parc" and then were driven across the river to a little town where all our baggage was brought, and where we were served lunch before making the two-thirty train to Paris.

#### RETURN TO PARIS

A three-hour trip brought us there into the gare de L'Est, and I need not tell you how my heart sang as we drove out to Passy! Arriving in Paris is always so wonderful to me. It is just like having been at school and coming home for the holidays! At the Rue Raynouard I found some mail that I will answer separately, and from there I went down to "the chinese umbrella" (a restaurant [American] just back of the hotel Meurice) taking with me one of the Wilsons who came over on the boat with us, but who has stayed in Paris doing mechanical work. He had seen Ward Barron

that day who said he was returning to America, and it seems Cosmo Morgan has already gone to be attached to Pershing's "home staff." Austin Tubbs expects to go back shortly too, so California will not have many representatives here! I feel that since I wrote so much about human cupidity on the other page, I must be honest enough to own up that is not the only disenchanting thing I have encountered over here, and of the other I myself am guilty. It had seemed to me as I watched the wounded carried in up at the "*poste*" and listened to their cries, that I could surely never again enjoy the sensuous things of life. I was perfectly sincere at the time, but within the very week I found myself looking forward to sleeping and feasting in Paris, and you can't imagine how wonderfully this particular meal tasted. Eggs, corn bread, sweet potatoes, rice, flannel cakes, melon and even tea, which I had not had since leaving San Francisco! ! That night I slept at the Grand hotel (I had lived at almost every other hotel in Paris!) and the next morning was out at the Rue Raynouard for nine o'clock roll call. We had to stay around there most of the day, being assigned our cars and getting them in readiness to start off the next morning. I managed to call up Mrs. Tiffany, who was not at home, and went to the Rue Cortambert, for a few minutes where I had almost an hour's visit with Sister Marie Pia, (Miss Peyton). The nuns had just gone on retreat, but they very kindly allowed her to come and speak with me. Her nephew Bernard Peyton is also in the Ambulance service, and, had I only known it, was in the section just a few miles from ours at our last post. The Chapel of the Servantes has acquired a wonderful atmosphere since the war, and anyone doubting the real beauty and utility of the contemplative life, ought to go as I did from the battle front there. Thank God there are in the world, at the present time, at least a few who have given up their lives, in an unqualified way to the worship of infinite Peace and Beauty and Harmony! There are surely enough of others whose adoration or its equivalent goes in another direction, and this war is the proof!

#### NAPOLEON'S TOMB—THE OPERA COMIQUE

Later that afternoon I stole an hour without asking anyone and took the Wilson brothers to see Napoleon's tomb and Notre Dame,

ending up at the ONE cafe de la Paix! ! These boys have been in Paris now over four weeks, and hadn't seen a single thing that was worth while, so as they had a few hours off Thursday I was determined to at least start them in the right direction. The Invalides is more wonderful than ever, and always seems to me to be the last word of tribute to the French sense of perfect taste. Imagine the tombs that other nations might have built for their heroes! Germany for instance! ! The court as you enter is now crowded with all sorts of war trophies, taken from the enemy in the last three years. Inspecting them closely gave me further proof of the mad waste of energy in war! Any one of the smaller pieces of artillery (and there are thousands on every side in this conflict) would, if its cost were differently invested maintain at least one bed in perpetuity in any hospital! ! Every shell that is fired, many of which luckily bury themselves in the ground doing no damage, were its price invested in food, would feed a starving family for months. I wondered as I looked around me at the Invalides if America was really so much to be congratulated on her subscription to the liberty bonds! ! And I couldn't help wondering too, if the German Emperor really was inspired to start this war in imitation of Napoleon's career; how terrible must be the anguish of that great hero, as he looks down on this world and sees it suffering still through the example he had given! ! Notre Dame was never lovelier than that afternoon in the misty rain, and its rose window seems to have grown more beautiful, as the French people say, mourning for her sister in Rheims. The book sellers are still all along the Seine and that part of Paris is entirely unchanged. As usual, everyone in the world was at the café de la Paix, and I would love to have lingered there, but had to hurry back to the Rue Raynouard, for orders for the next day. There I learned that we must report for roll call at five-thirty A. M., and leave Paris an hour later, on the day following. I am sure you all know how constantly dear Madame André was in my mind when in Paris, and the fact that she was no longer there left a very big void. I had written Mr. André since reaching France, and much as I dreaded seeing all the family, I didn't want to be in Paris again without paying my respects. I managed therefore to call at the Rue des

Entrepreneurs Thursday evening about eight o'clock, and had a very nice visit with Madame André's two sisters and her aged mother. She is more missed than you can possibly imagine; in fact, we were all so near tears that none of us dared mention her name. Mr. André is very hard worked at the present time and seldom gets home, but I will see him next time I am in Paris. From there I went to the Opera Comique where they were giving a performance of "Madame Butterfly." It was the first music I had heard since the last Philharmonic concert in San Francisco, which seems like a prehistoric event, (so much has happened since) and I can't begin to tell you how affecting the whole thing was. It was beautifully rendered; the "Butterfly" being like a real flower, and the fact that I was back again at the Opera Comique—such wonderful memories—quite overcame me and had it not been that everyone around was sobbing, so that I was unnoticed, I would certainly have had to leave. I spent that night again at the Grand, but got to the Rue Raynouard very early the next morning by means of the metro. We started from there almost on time and drove for many hours.

#### ON THE MARCH

Getting out of Paris was rather difficult for the machines were new and stopped readily and were then very difficult to crank. I had one puncture to repair on the road, and also an exhaust pipe to mend, and now I feel myself quite well able to run a Ford as well as a Cadillac! We stopped for lunch at a little town called St. Jean and reached the place where we had left our baggage two days before, by six o'clock. That was almost a twelve-hour run, but in convoy you have necessarily to go slowly. There are only about ten of the men including myself, who are with us now that were at the "chemin des dames". The others have just come over. They are mostly from Syracuse, N. Y., and seem to be a nice set. Mechanically speaking I am quite in their ken, and it is a great relief to hear such questions as "what do you do to stop it?" asked instead of the usual dissertations I am accustomed to hear about transmissions, differentials and compression! ! As we reached the town where we were to stop the night, one of the new men said he wasn't feeling very well, and asked to be shown his room. Con-

sidering that as a matter of fact, one's room is the place one finds to put his stretcher either in or out-of-doors—the request was rather inopportune—and showed that this young fellow had many shocks in store for him. So far, though, he has taken them all very well. That night I had a lovely sleep right out in the open and under the stars, I was as comfortable as could be, having recently purchased a goat-skin lined sleeping bag which is very warm.

The next day we drove over to this little village of Ronchere, where we will be *au repos* probably for a week or more. It is a very small place, but charmingly located and as restful as can be. The weather is wonderful too, and we eat out-of-doors. The change and the fact that we can but seldom, and then only faintly hear the sound of the guns, will do us all good, I think, for life near the front is at best terribly unnerving. The war has only been carried on with such success as it has been owing to the fact that the men are given rests away from the front every month or so, otherwise they would go mad. Most of the men here are sleeping in their cars, as the cantonment is very small and ill-equipped, but for once I acted promptly and engaged a little room in a village farmer's house. It costs me one franc a day, and though it is all that at another time I might have scorned, it is now the height of luxury, and even has a great deal of charm. My prayer is that I won't be suddenly dislodged to accommodate some officer that may be passing through, but I was obliged to take it subject to that condition. Sunday I walked to a little town called Frennes about three miles away to attend the "Grand Messe" and the rest of the day passed very uneventfully. Today I was on the "fatigue squad" and had to help peel potatoes, wash around the kitchen and make myself generally useful to the mechanics and cooks. Four of us have this duty every day, and I don't know if my inability to enthuse about it indicates that the royalist or aristocrat is not yet extinct in me, or whether it simply is that I am lazy as usual! !

This is all my news up to date, so you see I am well and busy and as happy as the times will allow; Heaven grant that when the Reichstag convenes as it does September 26, it will offer an acceptable peace, or, in other words, simply peace.

I love you all most dearly, and my thoughts are ever with you.

Devotedly, NÖEL.



*"Somewhere in France,"*

*October 2, 1917*

HOME AND OTHER SICKNESS

*Dearest Everyone:—*

It seems almost impossible to believe that a whole week has passed since writing to you, for though the days have gone by quickly enough, I had the feeling that being "*au repos*" with comparatively little to do, it would take a long time for seven of them to roll by. My last letter was from the village of Roncheres, and when I wrote it I had no idea how soon we were to leave there. Word came Monday night for us to move on, but I didn't hear of it until the next morning and then began the usual packing up, with as much work and trouble as if we had stopped many months. I believe in my last letter I told you about our moving, with kitchen, work-shop, and all carried in trucks from one place to the other and so it was this time. That particular day I happened to be feeling wretchedly, and would have done anything to have remained in the little room I had found, the comfort of which I had not begun to appreciate until I was obliged to leave it. My indisposition was just slight, the probable result of the sudden change of diet occasioned by my visit to Paris, and it only lasted twenty-four hours. There is no background quite so ideal though, for an attack of homesickness, which came and held me in its throes for most of the week. The drive over here was much the same as all of our others had been, but my thoughts were all of trips in Shamrock, Didden's car and Glad's Renault, made through the same sort of country. This town which we reached after driving about two hours, is smaller than the other and had no accommodation in the way of rooms to rent, or stores where delicacies might be purchased—all of these things are decided tragedies to the sick man, and so I felt very forlorn. I no doubt looked so too, for the men here were all most kind to me. This attention was very touching I assure you, coming from those who seem to think that efficiency in caring for the wounded comes by hardening one's self to all suffering. The next day found me feeling much better, and the day after that entirely well, and now I am even over my homesickness to a certain extent at least, and eager to

get every thing possible out of this great experience. Just on our arrival here that first night I learned that Section 66 had been here before us and was leaving the next morning. Knowing that Bernard Peyton was among them, I made an effort to see him, and had a few minutes chat with him. He is a good looking young fellow with delightful manners, and it was very nice to meet anyone associated with California. I couldn't help wondering, though, how he felt about the Dupont industry, and was glad we didn't have more time in which to discuss the ethics of war!

#### A SERMON

This week has been the quietest and most uneventful since I have been in France and I have done little else but write and walk and think. There are so few to talk to and there is so little to talk about, but certainly that doesn't apply to thinking, and I am profoundly thankful for my love of solitude and contentment in loneliness!! The nights have been beautiful with full moon again, and the country around is a terrestrial paradise, removed as it is from the sound of the cannon's roar. I don't mean by what I have said of being alone that there is no one to talk to, for quite a number of the men are unusually interesting, but somehow with them I am usually on the defensive about something, and so I like to get away by myself. In connection with our arguments I must say that I have been wonderfully happy in being able to hold my own and uphold my point of view, better than I have in a long time. I have complained to so many of you recently of losing sight of my own ideas when brought face to face with those of another more fluently expressed, and that is why I am reporting this change to you. And I must add this for Florence's benefit, that being the only catholic here, I have seen the church from the outside as it were, and agree perfectly that that is one of the great ways to learn to appreciate her. Florence would hear herself very often quoted in my defenses of catholicism, and when I find myself embarrassed to answer some criticism, I just say, "Of course you don't know the first thing about which you are talking" and it is usually pretty true. Our discussions are always friendly though, and the wonderful impression made by the "aumoniers" or Chaplains at the front on all the men without exception, makes them

sympathetic to the work of the church in the present war. I wonder if any of you have read "God the Invisible King" by H. G. Wells, in which he presents the claim of a finite God of almost human limitations, and powerless to change world conditions. This book has been read and accepted by almost every man in the section, and is our continual bone of contention. Speaking of Wells, I wonder too if any of you have read the New Republic of September first. There is a really worth while article in it by him on the attitude of the allies toward peace. He explains the German people clinging to their government just as the man on a runaway horse clings to it when the wolves pursue. The attitude with which the Papal note was received was almost wolfish I think, and though the French papers have been bitterly resentful and denounced it as pro-German, the French people understand it is only human. Why have peace if there are only a few maimed embittered people left to enjoy it? I don't think anyone who has tasted of the horrors of war would have replied to it as President Wilson did. What a lot of announcements there have been this last week. The Bernsdorff intrigue in Washington, and the Bolo Pasha in Paris, seem shocking, but it does seem so like England to implicate poor Ireland now, in order to excuse her own disgraceful conduct of April, 1916, and get out of doing for Ireland what she intends having other powers do for the small nations of the earth. In this same New Republic there is a very wonderful article by John Dewey on "Conscription of Opinion." We all had great hopes for the opening of the Reichstag, and were horribly disappointed in the little promise there was of peace in Michaelis' arrogant message. Undoubtedly they are making a great bluff now, and soon we may expect to hear a more conciliatory tone. Some really pessimistic and entirely frank French soldiers have told us that the difference between the way the Germans fight now and fought last year is most striking. They think the German troops realize the end is near, and are as anxious to save as many lives (Germans) and as much ammunition as possible. Many of them think, too, that Germany is too smart to fight America, for if she does the war will have to last at least two years, and casualties in the American Army will take away from Germany her one

possible client after the war. This might bring about a very early peace, if only the allies won't be unreasonable. Undoubtedly all nations have learned their lesson by now and the next offensive war will surely come from some nation not involved in this present one. I have thought so often lately of how few people really pray for peace. They desire it in a passing way, and all the praying they do consists in saying, "I wish this old war would stop." If numbers would only unite in making prayers for peace, a work of the day, it would surely come. When one thinks of the power that scientific research admits there is in prayer, and not viewing it from the religious aspect at all, it seems to be a real duty for all of us. I know myself how little thought I gave it from this point of view, before coming over here, and yet I was more concerned than most people, but when one sees every day hundreds and hundreds of men going up to the trenches to be slaughtered, in all probability, like cattle, in fact even more cruelly, one thinks that it is about time to try and reach the hearts of the tyrants back of all of this by some other means more potent than powder. (I seem always to manage to give you a weekly sermon, do I not?) By now you must all know of the shocking death of young Mac-Monagle. I have been really sick over it, thinking of that poor mother crossing the ocean, and receiving that news on her arrival here, and it is only one case out of, I suppose, thousands. I wonder which is greater, national honor or mother love? Surely the mothers ought to decide that.

There are many of the men who claim to be intuitive that say they feel the proximity of peace, but considering how certain I felt about its coming in August, 1915, I am afraid ever again to venture an opinion. Conditions are better in France all the time. We are having white bread again now, and the meatless days in the big cities are to be abolished.

Since last writing you I have been on duty two days (from Saturday to Monday) doing hospital evacuation work in a town about ten miles from here. We wait at a *poste* there for calls to the different hospitals, and the patients we carry are always convalescent, so the work is much more agreeable. It was a very nice change to have these two days off by myself, and free from even the little

discipline that is enforced around here. I have been sleeping in my ambulance "No. 12," which is very comfortable, and as all my belongings are in it, it seems like a house on wheels. The engine will go better when it has run a little farther, and is very easy to care for. It was interesting to meet new people in this other town, and I ran into a soldier there who at one time when he had been a traveling salesman had visited San Francisco. That was in 1905. He seemed like a long lost brother. Another one there, also a "chasseur," had made the campaign into Alsace at the outbreak of the war, and had fought in the taking of Mulhouse, the city which had always remained faithful to France. He told thrillingly of how the people, men and women, came out to welcome them, and notwithstanding the shell fire insisted on bringing them drink and refreshment. If any war could be inspiring, that certainly would be the sort, when men were not obliged to live like rats as they are now, but fought in the open, and had some means of individual expression. There was a very impressive Mass for the dead of this particular regiment Saturday morning, just after I got there, and the next afternoon there was a fête of some sort resembling our church picnics, with just those same games of blind man's race, etc., and it was good and yet infinitely pathetic to see how the men enjoyed it! I had only one hospital call in all the time I was there and that took me about two hours to do.

#### TOWN BOMBED

That night, a nearby town was raided by German aviators, and bombs dropped killing four persons. The bombs fell right between the hospital and the railway station. Let us hope they were aiming for the latter. There was of course great excitement over the whole countryside, and as many search-lights as we used to have at the exposition were playing on the heavens in quest of the aviator who was invisible in the moonlight. We are near a lovely town here called Mont Notre Dame, with an old church situated on the hill above it which reminded me very much of Monte Casino. Formerly when we were near the lines, we were right by the plateau de la Californie. Strange—was it not? Our plans as usual are indefinite and we may be here some time. I was forgetting to tell you that at this last place where I spent Saturday and

Sunday, I was given the most delicious of breakfasts by one of the villagers. Nothing could have been more like home. It is wonderful to come in touch with the people this way. They and the "poilus" are really worth while. Apropos of "poilus" I am letting my beard grow, so that soon I will be quite like one. It is ten days today since I shaved, and though I guess the worst of it is over, I am still glad that none of you are here to see me.

I have at last managed to use a carbon, so it won't be necessary to send this East unless to Didden if he isn't yet in California.

I will now say good-bye with most loving messages to all of you! If the war does nothing else for me it is really deepening my emotions, and teaching me each day how very dear you all are to me.

Nine years ago today Carmel arrived in California. What a wonderfully happy day that was—one of the happiest of my life. And nothing now makes me happier than to think of the beautiful convent in Santa Clara. Heaven grant that we may all celebrate her tenth anniversary in a world of peace and forgiveness!

It is dark now and I can hardly see, so must stop.

Your ever devoted

NÖEL.

*October 9th, 1917.*

CALIFORNIANS REUNITED

*Dearest Everyone:—*

It is hard to believe that yet another week has passed since last writing to you for we have been “au repos” and very little of interest one way or the other has happened. Since last Thursday (today is Tuesday) we have been stationed in the little village from which I wrote you two weeks ago, and I have been fortunate enough to find my little one franc room vacant again and to be welcomed back to it by the hospitable old “patronne.” We surely seem to do a lot of apparently useless moving which always involves such a lot of work, and so it was this time when we came back here from the other quarters which we had just about managed to make comfortable after our week’s sojourn there.

I got my letter off to you last Tuesday, the next day was spent writing (surely, if coming over here accomplishes nothing else for me than giving me the chance to write letters and make out my accounts, etc., it will not have been useless). That night having heard that there was a camp of camion drivers of the Field Service about three miles away, I walked over there in the hope of finding some of the men that had come over at the same time that I did. I was just about to retrace my steps, being able to find no trace of them, when I happened to make a last inquiry of an officer who informed me that some Californians had come there within the last hour. With some little difficulty I located them and found Doud of Monterey and Austin Tubbs to be among the newcomers. LaMontague was there also but I didn’t see him. Well, such a tale of woe as I heard from these men, it would take me many hours to repeat! They have really had a very hard deal of it and looked worn out with hard work. The trucks are fearfully heavy to drive and they were often kept waiting for eight and nine hours in ammunition parks with nothing at all to do, waiting for them to be loaded. None of these had signed up in the army, and were waiting to be let out of the service, though there was no certainty as to when that would be. I feel I was wonderfully fortunate to have insisted on getting into this branch of the service, when so much pressure was brought to bear in favor of

the other. Tubbs was a friend of young MacMonagle and seemed to feel very badly over his death. It seems though that Mrs. MacMonagle was not crossing the ocean at the time, as the Herald had stated, but had been in Paris for the last six months so as to be near her son. This makes it a little less awful, though even as it is, it is surely bad enough.

#### HIS COMRADE'S HEROISM

News has also undoubtedly reached you of the unhappy fate of two of the men in this section. One of them, Carson Ricks of Eureka, California, was seriously wounded by a shell which burst near his car as he was driving wounded men to the hospital. He is making a very good recovery, although he will probably never again have the use of his left arm; but his driving companion, a Chicago man, died as the result of his injuries, and three out of the four wounded that they were carrying, were instantly killed. This all happened on September thirteenth. Ricks' conduct was really heroic and he showed great presence of mind running to the nearest farm house for help. On the way he fell several times from weakness and eventually fainted from loss of blood. Both men were given the "Croix de guerre" and certainly merited it. Ricks had the additional distinction of being the first man in the American army to be wounded in this great war. His companion had not signed up expecting to return to America within the next few weeks.

Our drive over here the next day was a cold and windy one, in fact, the bad weather seems to have started in and we have had much rain and cold. It would be impossible though for me to be more comfortable than I am here in my cozy little room, and in this town there is an inn where at almost any time we can get a hot cup of chocolate. There is really exceedingly little to tell about this week for nothing out of the ordinary has happened. We have all had to do considerable work on our cars (can you imagine me?) and I have had one day of "fatigue" duty. Sunday I walked over to a nearby village to Mass, as there are no priests in this town, and there, the soldiers not being used to our uniform, reported my presence to the captain. He sent a man for me just as I was leaving the church and for a moment I thought the same sort of thing that



happened in Germany three years ago, was going to be my experience again, but this time I was in the hands of a Frenchman and a gentleman, and it didn't take very long to convince him that I wasn't a spy. Saturday afternoon we drove over to the hospital where Ricks is being cared for. He has made a wonderful recovery and was to be moved to Paris the next day. The men in the section improve very much on acquaintance and there are some that have a good deal of personality and charm. Since the wet weather has started, we have had regular afternoon teas prepared by them, and I believe they are to be kept up as a section institution. Indeed it is not we that should be pitied at all, but the poor fellows in the trenches. Last night there was a very heavy bombardment, which we could hear but faintly, but it filled me with horror thinking of the poor soldiers and all it might possibly be meaning to them. The people in whose house I am staying are firm believers in spiritualism and get all their information from table tapping, which they resort to quite regularly. They claim that it has never failed them, and now it tells them that the war will be over in February. Sometimes the tone of the newspapers seems very encouraging, particularly within the last week. It seems, too, that there are more "ifs" in every statement Germany makes regarding peace or the terms thereof. I wonder though what Mr. Hoover is doing, allowing the prices of food to mount in America as they evidently are. It seems to be a great surprise and disappointment to the French people who think us capable of feeding all of the Allies without feeling it ourselves. Before I forget it, any time that any of you have magazines or newspapers they would be very gratefully received over here, were you to care to send them. Reading matter is at a premium in this section and anything in the way of news from America is always most acceptable. I have meant to mention that if you ever receive a cable, obviously from me, signed by someone else or with another name besides my own signed to it, you will understand that it is impossible to dispatch it from here, and that I have had to send the message into Paris by mail. The cable address that will always reach any man in this service is "AMERFIELD PARIS" in case any of you ever want to use it. I can't tell you how hungry

I am for some recent news from home. The mails are so terribly slow and my last letters from California were mailed there before the end of August. It took over twenty-five days for my steamer letter to go from Bordeaux to New York, so that gives you an idea. I suppose I should be the last person on earth to complain of not getting letters, nor do I, knowing too well that none of you would treat me as I deserve to be treated. It is only the law of compensation that is keeping me waiting, and I'm sure the next steamer that arrives will put an end to that!

Today the section chef told me that I would have to shave off my eighteen-day growth of beard which is just beginning to be becoming, adding that "enlisted men were not allowed to wear them," so tomorrow I will cease to be a "poilu" at least as far as the outward appearances are concerned. I am very well otherwise and anxious to be back on duty. This sort of life seems too much like an incumbrance to the country in these times. My French has been very fluent of late—it seems to have taken it just so long to loosen up as it were—and many of the soldiers with whom I have talked think I ought to try to be an interpreter. I like this work so well that I would much rather not think of changing for the present at least and certainly hope I will see the end of the war in it. The greatest deprivation it has to offer, besides keeping me so far away from you all, lies in the fact that I never get near to a piano and have no chance to sing. But that would be the same in every branch of the service, I imagine.

Though we have been in the Army more than a month now, there has been no sign of pay day as yet, but perhaps the next time I write I will have that to tell about. I certainly hope the next letter will be more interesting than this one!

My best love always to you all!

Your ever devoted

NÖEL.

P.S.—On Sunday all the clocks in France were turned back an hour so as to make use of the daylight and economize fuel for lighting purposes.

October 16, 1917.

(*Three months since Carmel's Dedication.*)

VILLAGE LIFE

*Dearest Everyone:—*

This time there is certainly very little to write about, for we are still *au repos* and in the same place as we were when I wrote you last. The weather has been very cold and wet and a gale has blown most of the time, so that we have had something of a taste of what the suffering of the men in the trenches must be during the winters. I, as you know, have been fortunate enough to have my little room, not the same one however as I had last week, but one upstairs, where I was put to give place to an officer doctor, and the moving was one of the events of the week! This little room is less comfortable in some ways but commands a beautiful view of the valley, which means much, as I spend a lot of time within these four walls. The doctor, who is now living below me, is a very charming French Algerian, and we have had many good talks together and he has told me much of interest about his country and other things. My landlord and landlady have been more hospitable too since the cold weather has started and have insisted on my sharing their log fire in the evenings (which do not last very long—I am always in bed shortly after eight, getting almost eleven hours' sleep, breakfast being at seven) and it is interesting in a way to hear them talk with no other thoughts in the world but for their son who is at the war, and the activities of their farm, which ten years ago would have been most absorbing to me! In this part of the country the people speak a very peculiar, and almost at times, unrecognizable French. The store keeper in this little town was busy making waffles when I dropped in there the other evening, and when I happened to express surprise at seeing them in France, saying that they were a favorite dish of mine, they insisted that I return at dinner time and have some. This was Friday and doubly acceptable on that account! They served me very generously and would not hear of accepting pay, so since then in order to return the politeness I have been a regular patron of the store! Letters have come too since last I wrote, and though the news was over a month old, at least that from California, it

was nevertheless infinitely welcome. I have often read descriptions of the arrival of the mails at the front, but no one has any idea what it is until one has seen it. For the few moments that letters are being distributed and read, the bleak surroundings of the cantonment seem to disappear and are temporarily replaced by scenes of lands and places far from this war area! So please, remembering this, don't treat me as I deserve to be treated, and write often, so that the beautiful surroundings of your lives may frequently be reflected in these parts. Pay day has come and gone too in the last week! It was singularly uneventful except for the fact that I carried off from the "pay-wagon" two hundred francs and fifty centimes—that was up to October first. I must say it was well earned, and I am going to keep it for the purpose of buying some lasting souvenirs for those who have reason to regret I was so slow in earning my FIRST PAY!

Last Thursday I took a long walk (over twelve kilometers each way, and "en plus" I lost my way) to a nearby fairly large sized town. There I was photographed "en poilu" before having my beard shaved off (I will send the pictures when I receive them) and managed to have a very good, really French dinner at the Hotel before starting back on my long walk, which brought me here about nine o'clock. Sunday I walked to the usual nearer town to Mass. Saturday I was on the "kitchen squad" and most of the rest of the time has been spent walking and writing.

#### GERMAN PRISONERS

Another event of the week, and I can't imagine how I came so near forgetting it, was the arrival of some sixty German prisoners who are being lodged in this town and are working near here. I doubt, if, relatively speaking, the arrival of Joffre caused any more excitement in New York than the coming of these poor individuals. This town has a Town-cryer—can you imagine such a thing?—and it was he who prepared us for the event. (The only other time he has made an announcement within the last week it had something to do with the muzzling of dogs). The prisoners are really very well treated—I mean for prisoners—their fare comparing favorably with what convicts get in "the land of the free." Each day they have a certain task to accomplish, and are

paid for any extra work they do. Their mail and packages come through Switzerland twice a month. They are really a very inferior looking class of men, and are literally square headed! I never saw anything as ox-like in my life before, and can't imagine where they were kept in Germany. Undoubtedly the Kaiser was raising them for slaughter, so I suppose it didn't matter much. I have had little chance to talk with them, but they certainly look simple, and not of the stock that could play an active part in the world's secret service.

Things look hopeful for peace these days, it seems to me; in fact it is in the very air, and I am sure the differences in the German parliament are really significant of something conciliatory. It was only this last week I read the President's reply to the Papal note, and must take back what I wrote about it previously. The tone of it was far different to what I expected it would be, from the quotations made use of from it by the French press, which is still so hostile to the Vatican, and seemed to regard Wilson's reply as properly "insulant." It seemed, on the contrary, to me to be full of courtesy, and there is always something in his style, most impelling of admiration.

You know, without my saying it, I hope, that I am well in every way, and so I trust no one worries about me. This "repos" may last indefinitely, and perhaps we have seen as much of active warfare as is intended for this section.

I am anxious to hear that some of these letters have reached you. Tell me when you write, if they come regularly and if they are always opened and much censored.

You know my thoughts and my love are always with you, and my most earnest wish is "God bless you all."

Your ever devoted

NÖEL.

P. S.—The welcome sun has come again in these last few days, so we are once more enjoying the mild autumn weather.

*October 23, 1917.*

## DAILY ROUTINE

*Dearest Everyone:—*

Here is my day again for writing you, but this time I don't know what on earth I am going to tell you, for since last Tuesday nothing at all has happened and we are still in the same place with no apparent prospects of leaving it. Provided though that you know I am "off duty" and absolutely safe, and consequently do not worry about me, I am satisfied to stay here indefinitely, but I hope you are not kept waiting for our mail as long as we are for yours. My last family letter from California was marked September thirteenth; though written some days before, and those from the east no later than the seventeenth. One other stray letter of Sept. 20's post-mark in S. F. reached me a day or so ago and the only acknowledgment of my steamer letters that I have had from the west so far was from Mrs. Harrison, and that on Sept. 14. I do hope more than I can say that my letters, uninteresting as they may all be, are at least reaching their destination and I trust that none of the many I have been writing during the last month were on the ill-fated "Antilles." It would really be tragic to think how long some of them have been owed and now to meet that fate! Before I forget I want to tell you that were you ever to want to cable me I think the quickest way would be to Hottinguer, Paris—for if they are addressed to "Amerfield" they go through England and then to the American Expeditionary Forces, and it is liable to be two weeks before they reach me. Even as it is you will have to allow at least a week to have an answer and that is taking for granted the cables go right through, for it takes two days for mail to come to me from Paris and two more days before my answer could get back there to be wired. It makes me shudder when I think how far away I am from all of you, but then we must remember it could be worse. There are ambulance drivers in the Balkans, but there is no fear of my being sent there. I am told they have to wait three months for a letter.

There is really so little to tell you of this week's doings that I don't know what to write. Our day is as follows: Breakfast at seven; roll call, seven-thirty; then setting up, or Swedish Exercises,

for a quarter of an hour (this last is a new institution of the last few days). The mail, if there is any, usually comes before nine. Lunch is at eleven-thirty and supper at five-thirty. If I am not assigned a particular task, I usually spend many hours in my room trying to write, and every evening after dinner, when it is at all fine, I go for a long walk and that is the time I spend entirely with you all, as it were. So, won't you, allowing for the difference in time (now eight hours later than California, and five hours later than the East), think of me between six and seven in the evening here? That will be shortly after ten in the morning in California—and then our thoughts will surely meet! I have had a few good walks to near-by towns, though the weather on the whole has been pretty wet and disagreeable. Sunday after Mass in one of the little villages, I managed to find a hot shower, which enabled me to have my first bath in a month. *That* surely was the event of the week!

#### PEACE RUMORS

The little farm house where I am staying continues to be as comfortable and friendly as ever, though most every night this week the kitchen (and consequently the nice fire) has been used to prepare the dinner of officers who were passing through the town and dined here. No doubt you have all heard at home the rumor, entirely unofficial of course, that the U. S. had made a proposition of peace to Germany through Switzerland, offering to pay herself for the rehabilitation of Belgium and Northern France (which Germany would evacuate, of course) if Germany would give back Alsace-Lorraine to France, and in the event of Germany wanting her colonies (Germany's) that she would pay England two billion for them. This would evidently do away with the question of indemnities, but I wonder how about Russia, Poland, Italy and the Balkans!

#### HIS MARRAINE

The news of the great Zeppelin victory caused great excitement here on Sunday. For the last four days or so there has been almost incessant bombardment on the distant front. It can be heard from here and the Germans seem to be getting at this end all that they may be missing in Russia!

Mademoiselle Robinne (Mme. Alexandre) of the Comedie Francaise has written offering to be my "Marraine," which is really a very great honor and pleased me very much. This week's mail brought, I forgot to tell you, packages from Miss Robson and Mlle. Saligne, both containing the most acceptable knitted things for the winter (cap, helmet, sweater, and muffler), so you see I have not been so badly treated after all! The enclosed scraps might, I thought, interest you—I was so very delighted to hear of Alexandre receiving the *crois de guerre* without being wounded. "The harbinger of peace" seemed a cheering omen to me, and I thought that our little magazine might interest you. The poem which speaks of California and Russia "being doubtful" is really amusing, don't you think?

Well, after all I have managed to write more than I expected when I started out, and I hope you aren't all too terribly bored. It was two months Sunday since my arrival in France and I must say they have not flown, and none of you need worry about my wanting to linger here after peace is declared.

My constant prayer is that you are all well, and I am hoping very soon to hear from you.

Very best love always.

Your ever devoted,  
NÖEL.

P. S.—I hope nothing I have said would lead you to believe that I am unhappy or bored here. On the contrary I am very well and feel I will some day look back on these days as some of the very happiest of my life, for they have afforded me a wonderful lot of solitude in which to analyze my chaotic life, of the past three years in particular, and to make a number of resolutions that I hope I am going to keep.



November 10, 1917.

REFLECTIONS ON AN ABATTOIR

*Dearest Everyone:—*

From day to day we have been waiting for the “ordre de mouvements” but as yet it hasn’t come and there is no indication as to when it will. The little house in which I am staying gets to feel more like home all the time and its owners are ever increasingly kind!

My news seems to date from November first, All Saints Day, Fete de la Toussaint, when I asked permission to go to Mass at one of the nearby towns. It was accorded me, and so as to save gasoline, which is very scarce, I also went for the “ravitailment” (provisions) for the section. This brought me to the “abattoir” or slaughter house—it was the first time I had ever been to one, and I feel I must tell you how perfectly terrible it is. I suppose this one was rather primitive, and perhaps a little more awful on that account, but the spirit of cruelty must be the same in all of them. Fortunately for me they were only killing beef that day (had I to see sheep, calves or pigs slaughtered, I don’t know what I would have done), but the blood galore, the cruelty, indifference and innate efficiency of the butchers is something I will never forget!! The terror and anguish of the poor beasts is an appalling spectacle—almost worse than any of the war scenes that I have witnessed—there is something so hopelessly inevitable about it—and I am certain that the germs of war and of capital punishment are incubated in slaughter houses. I am sure after all this discourse you are not surprised to hear that I decided on the spot to become a vegetarian, and have not touched meat since. An entirely new love for Carmel welled up in my heart, when I thought that they, at least by their demands, do not countenance this shocking institution. It gave me a reverence, too, for Theosophists, who out of an ideal appreciation of the psychological result of slaughter houses on the men who work in them, renounce the eating of meat. Some day I am sure the world will realize how this custom has retarded its progress, spiritually I mean (I am convinced it has bred a race of warriors), and will organize a sort of prohibition, as it already has against alcohol. What could be

more appropriate, than that such a movement should start in the city of Saint Francis, who, himself, so loved animals, and must undoubtedly have deplored their destruction?

As you may imagine I came back to the cantonment full of my horror (it is still great but then it was fresh), and I felt very proud that the meat I carried back was hardly touched, after the section had heard all I had to say on the subject. It really seemed like a triumph in art, to take away their appetities by a word picture, but as all of them have now resumed their former attitude, it may just have been that the meat was unpalatable that particular day. I am sure there is a reason back of the fact that the troops at the front are given all the beef they can possibly eat, just as there is back of the custom of giving them a brimming glass of rum before they make a bayonet charge.

In connection with all this I must add that I haven't missed meat at all. We have a new and excellent cook who formerly kept a restaurant in Bordeaux, the city of epicures, and he takes very good care of us.

#### VESPERS OF THE DEAD

All Saints day was really very wonderful here. At three o'clock Monsieur le Cure came from a nearby town for the vespers of the dead, and people who never go near a church at any other time were there that day for the memorial service for the departed. Reverence for the dead is inherent in the French, and were anyone to doubt it, he would only have to have witnessed the changed and recollected attitude of everyone those days, when mourning was donned even by those few who had not sustained any recent losses. After Vespers the bells in every church throughout this valley (and there are many) started in to toll, and did not cease until late at night—and, as a sort of mocking accompaniment to them, the cannon on the distant front kept up an intermittent bombardment. How strange life is—nothing is ever completely beautiful or completely vile! (No, I don't mean that either, I was forgetting the slaughter house which has no redeeming feature.)

All Souls Day was much the same as All Saints. I was able to attend Mass again at a nearer town to which I walked. It was offered for Mother, and perhaps it was she who made it possible

for me to go for twenty-four hours in Paris. For weeks I had been longing and praying to go there, but I had no particular reason which I could state in making the request, and the fabrication of an excuse seemed futile. Can you picture my emotion when our sergeant asked me out of a clear sky, if I would like to go, adding that he thought he could arrange it for me? I had to ask the Lieutenant myself, which I did at military tension though inwardly feeling as I would had I ever been obliged to borrow money. I simply said that there was a number of matters I would like to attend to and that I didn't want to take up his time enumerating them, whereupon he at once signed the order for me to leave for Paris on the morning of the third returning here on the fifth.

#### THE LURE OF PARIS

Only a child going home for the holidays knows how I felt. It was a foretaste of the sensation of knowing that peace has come and that we are to be mustered out of the army and sent home! Needless to say I didn't sleep a wink, nor did my "patron" or "patronne" who were quite as excited as I was. Paris to them seems much farther away from here than Calcutta would to us in San Francisco, and so they gave me a great send-off, bringing me hot water (an unheard of thing) at five-thirty A. M. for shaving. I left here shortly after seven and didn't reach Paris until considerably after noon, when I immediately saw to the many commissions with which I had been entrusted. I won't bore you with the details of those days which as you may imagine flew by, for I am always quite ashamed to find how quickly I am able to forget the wounded and the men in the trenches when I find myself in "la cité de joie." I saw many of my friends lunching at the "Marlborough" and "Ritz," dining at the Cafe de Paris and "Boeuf a la mode" and taking tea on each of the afternoons at the cafe de la Paix and "Tipperary" (a new and very fashionable tea house). My beloved Opera Comique welcomed me once more, and I heard superb performances of "Werther" and "Cavalleria Rusticana" there, which brought back three years ago most vividly. Then too, I went again to the Comedie Francaise—such blessed memories—and saw there a very wonderful war play by Bernstein, called "L'Elevation" which shows a few isolated

cases of people who have developed spiritually through the war. It was superbly done, and the first scene, in which you get the impression through a one-sided conversation at the telephone, that there is a world-wide tension, such as there was on August first, 1914, and that war is imminent, is one of the greatest pieces of acting I have ever seen. Of course the whole thing is too "vécu" and too much of our time to be anything but ghastly, and I assure you the audience was noisy with sobs throughout the greater part of the performance. While in Paris I also had the joy of getting to a piano once more, and being able to sing a bit with the accompanist (Mlle. de Boisval) I had when there three years ago. There is much else that I would love to tell you of stories I heard while there and a lot of other things but I think I had better let this letter go now and write you again on my usual day next week.

While in Paris I stopped at a little hotel near the Etoile, and Monday morning at eight o'clock I was at the Gare de L'Est waiting to take my train.

As you may imagine it has not been easy to resume life here, but I have tried to remember how ungrateful it would be to appear but cheerful, and have succeeded pretty well I think. I had much news of one sort or another with which to entertain the section, and in addition to this I brought back French pastry for all of them, the result being that they are clamoring for me to be sent to Paris again. I also brought a cake to my dear old landlady who is expecting her son back from the front any day, and it is being kept for consumption along with "the fatted calf" which is to be killed "des son arrivée."

We have had a second pay day this last week, and our cantonment (where we eat), which used to be in a tent has now been changed to quite a comfortable house. These are about the only items of news that I can think of—my own life goes on just the same as ever and I am *still* answering my letters. Many have come from America recently and it is needless to tell you how unspeakably welcome they always are. I think probably Hottinguer No. 38 rue de Provence, Paris, is the best address after all. Letters

from there seem to reach me the quickest and that is of course what I want.

I hope all I have written about the Slaughter House doesn't upset you. I suppose in time I will forget it, and you may all yet see me devouring a beefsteak! (In that event, please don't remind me of this letter!) I don't feel of course that the individual accomplishes much in denying himself meat—it only satisfies his ideal—and I think one should certainly begin by giving up the eating of meat as a practice first, before renouncing it entirely. I don't suppose either that the same thing applies to all meats. A chicken surely suffers less than something a hundred times its size. But though I am thankful that none of you were with me on November first, I am sure had you been, you would feel just as I do. Cows, you know, have always seemed to me to be the mothers of the whole world—they give us so much anyhow—that it was really too awful to see them after their lives of service, dying in a terrible convulsion, that man had brought on to satisfy his own appetite!

I will say good-bye now—until very soon! There has been some talk of our going to Italy, but I don't possibly see how that could be until the U. S. declares war on Austria, and presume it was started by some one with "a sense of rumor."

Loving you always superlatively, and more each day,

Yours ever devoted,

NÖEL.

END.















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